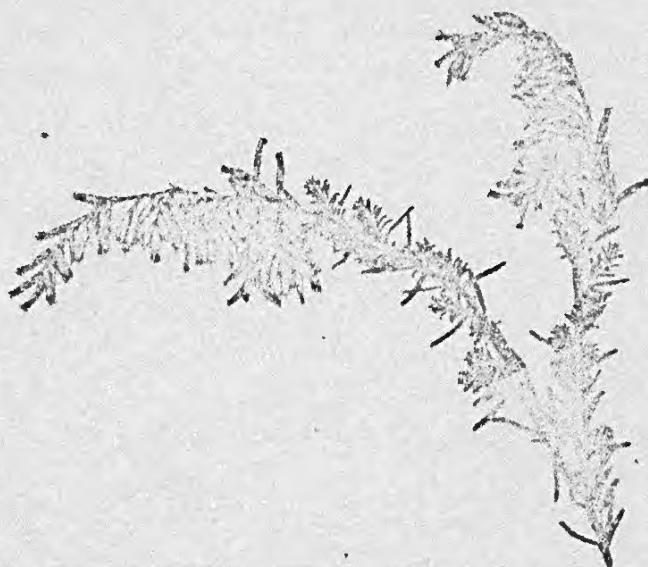


CASTLEMAINE

NATURALIST

APRIL '82

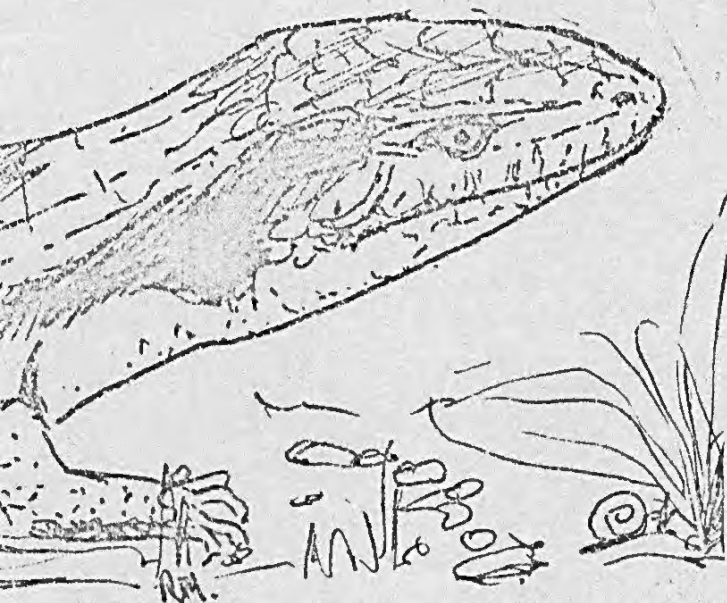
67



JUNIOR NATS

BLUE TONGUED LIZARDS

By Dianne Elliott.



Although the various kinds of blue tongues may not be the commonest of lizards they are certainly the best known. This is partly because of size and partly because of their behaviour. Some individuals reach about 60cm in length.

In the Eastern states blue tongues are found in suburban gardens and often become tame

enough to be a pet. Snails are favoured and a suburban garden with bluetongues in residence has very few snails. A welcome bonus for the keen gardener.

As pets living in gardens, they are not demanding and thrive on wild food such as insects, plus milk, bananas, raw meat, eggs and any other additional food put out for them. In the wild state bluetongues appear to be omnivores (eat any food).

The bluetongues are large members of the skink family and have smooth and shiny body scales

Various species of bluetongues are found all over Australia from the central deserts to coastal islands and from arid grasslands to lush rainforests. The common bluetongue is found throughout the eastern and northern Australia. Its name came from the habit of bluffing its way out of trouble

by opening its mouth wide and flicking in and out a broad blue tongue. Added to this fearsome display is the ability to puff out the body which is flattened and turned broad-side towards the enemy. The air used to swell the lungs may be expelled to produce a loud hiss. This behaviour usually frightens off most predators.

The young bluetongues are born alive and active. Some mothers may give birth to as many as 30 youngsters.

We have bluetongue lizards roaming about our place. They come inside to the laundry to get warmth from the gas hot water service. We found one in a sleeping-bag once in the bedroom.

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Finance- \$20-93 cash
\$125-33 Bank
\$146-26 total.

Subscriptions to be paid to- Bird Observers Club, \$6-00
W.V.F.N.C.A., \$5-00
Field Nats. Club of Vic. \$10

Letters from - Shire of Maldon. A letter of support in regard to the proposed new Mining Legislation. Shire of Metcalfe. Some advice on Ministries or people to contact re new Mining Legislation.

Mr Digby Crosier (Minister for Minerals and Energy) per Mr Bill Ebery (2). First was an acknowledgement of the Club's letter, the second a reply. Only 3 of our questions were really answered.

(a) There is to be close co-operation with the Forests Commission to minimize damage to vegetation.

(b) More staff is to be employed by the Department of Mines.

(c) Removal of trees is to be controlled as it is now.

The Theatre Royal has an offer for groups of over 20 for a discount which can go towards Club funds. It was decided to go as a group to see The French Lieutenant's Woman on Tuesday 20th April.

IF YOU WISH TO GO contact Frank Meyer on 72 1958 in the morning before 10 o'clock.

NARROW-LEAF PEPPERMINT AT
ELPHINSTONE

Once again John Lindner and other members of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club have recorded a new Eucalypt right on our doorstep.

This time it is the narrow-leaf peppermint, or *Eucalyptus radiata*.

They found it to be quite common on the rather rough road from the Koala Park to Elphinstone.

Narrow-leaf peppermint is fairly easy to recognise with its typical finely fibrous box-peppermint bark and its small leaves. The leaves usually hang vertically, and have the typical vein arrangement of the peppermints, in that the veins make a 20 to 30 degree angle to the main vein.

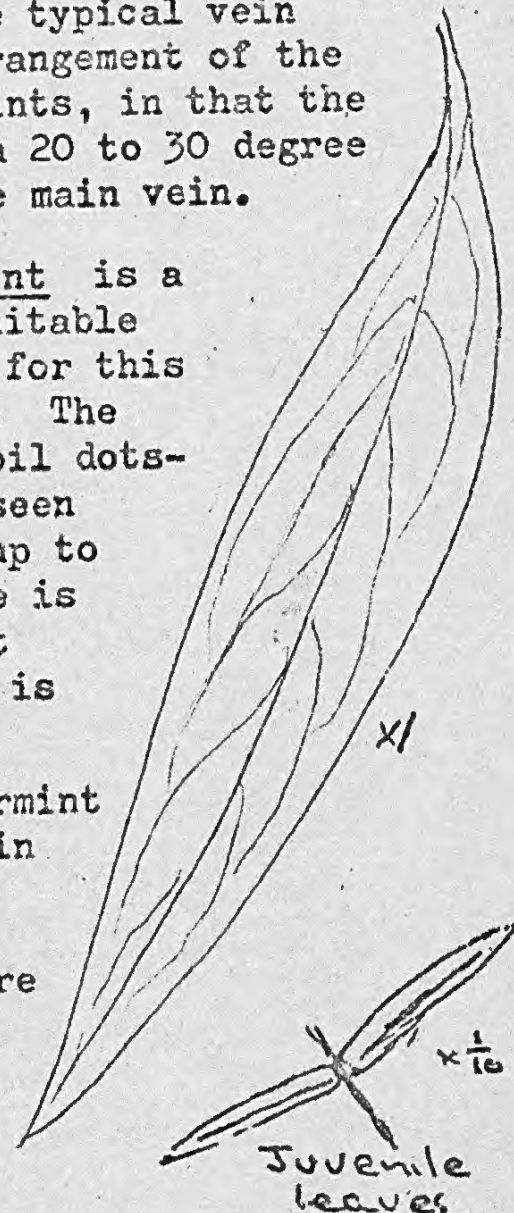
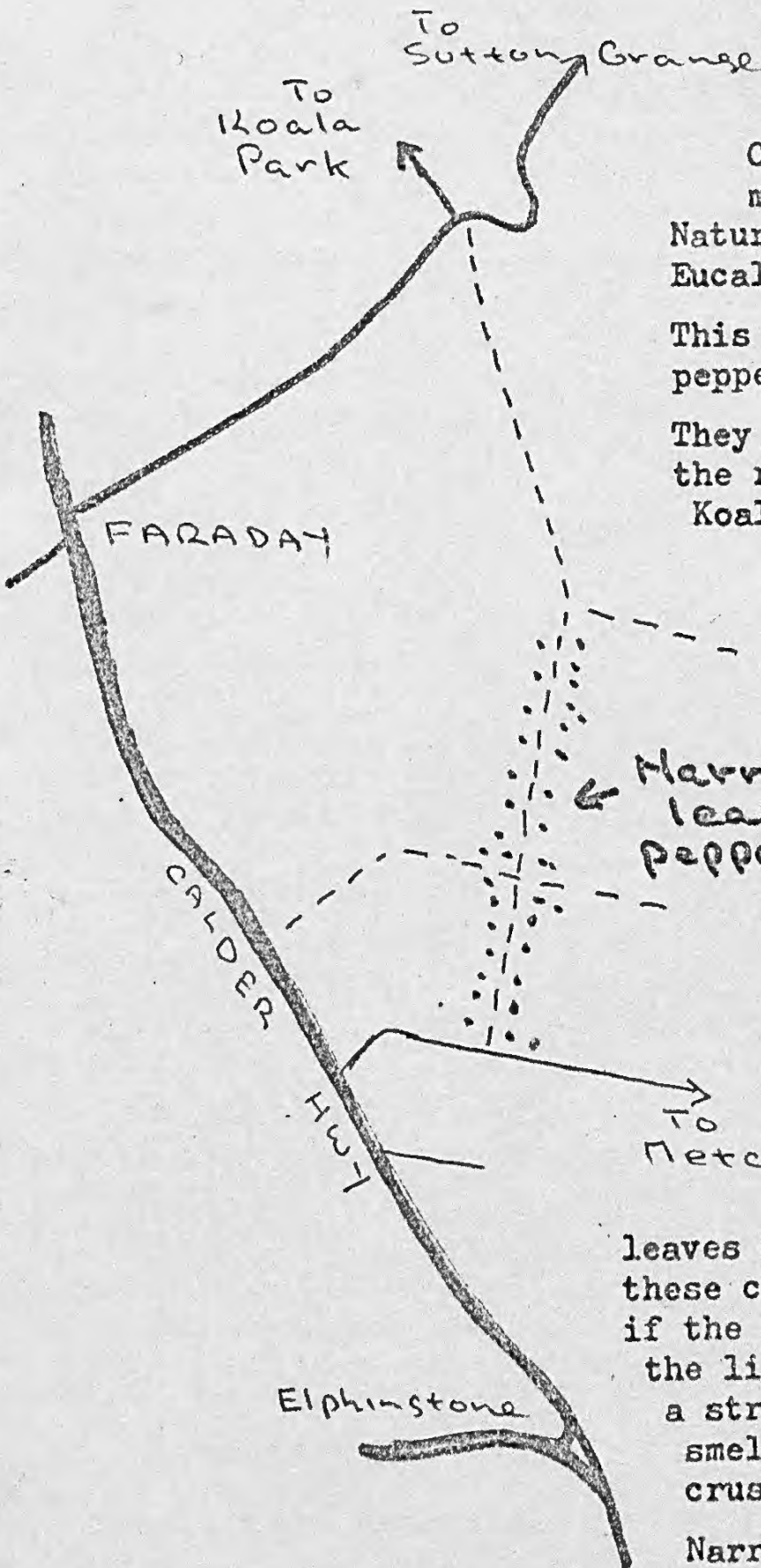
Peppermint is a very suitable name for this tree. The

leaves contain many oil dots—these can easily be seen if the leaf is held up to the light, and there is a strong peppermint smell if the leaf is crushed.

Narrow-leaf peppermint is a common tree in

the wetter areas of Victoria. They are quite common around Daylesford and the Wombat Forest. In such parts the trees would be more than twice the height of the Elphinstone specimens.

E. P.



HOW TO FIND EVIDENCE OF MAMMALS IN THE BUSH

This turned out to be the subject of Rob Wallis's lively lecture at the last meeting.

He has had 20 or so students working for him in survey work, including John Warden, now a teacher at the High School, who was with the team who found the Broad-toothed Rat at Powelltown, as recorded in a recent Victorian Naturalist.

There have been exciting developments in animal surveying - spotlighting of course, and also improved traps like the large one which doesn't risk harming the trapped animal, and a small collapsible aluminium one, which quickly flips into shape.

The standard bait used in the large trap is an apple coated with peanut butter, while the universal bait, which is usually used in the small one is a mixture of peanut butter, rolled oats and honey - good for a nibble if you get hungry!

Some individual animals find the bait so attractive that they run into the trap almost as soon as it is set. They become very well known to the trapper!

However, to trap, permits are necessary, and, except for possums, are very hard to come by, and the animal must be returned to the spot it was taken to be released.

The need to identify the mammal population is great in order to assess the conservation value of a tract of bush, and, as it was obvious neither spotlighting - which is suitable mainly for larger mammals - nor trapping, are entirely satisfactory, other methods were devised.

Hair, which is made up of dead cells, overlapping rather like a pine cone, is distinctive for each species. A human hair is nothing like a possum's, nor a possum's like a feather glider's, so if hair can be collected and examined microscopically with the aid of a book on identification, species in an area can be identified without traps or spotlight.

Now, foxes are very partial to blackberries first, and mammals second, and the hair of mammals (and the seed of blackberries) pass unaltered through the fox's intestine and pass out with the dropping, or scat. The dropping is washed in a sieve and the hairs are left behind, ready for microscopic examination. Both whole hairs and cross sections are used. The method has been termed "predator Scat Analysis".

Very closely related species such as the Brush-tailed Possum and the Bobuck, or Mountain Possum, can be confusingly similar, and the situation where the animal was found is then taken into account.

A rather gruesome aspect was the discovery of human hair on several occasions. Police were notified and a body subsequently found.

Another very simple technique can be used for small mammals. Take a 6" piece of 2" plastic pipe, stick a piece of double sided sticky tape along the inside top, place a piece of universal bait inside, and tape it to a bush or limb of a tree. The animal will go through the pipe after the bait and leave a few hairs on the tape, ready to be collected in the morning and examined. (Simple enough for a Club project? Perhaps we could send the tape to Rob to Identify? Ed)



"Swimming with Grebes"

Cont. from last month.

At first I thought they remained on the water at night, but late one evening, I saw all five and mother heading back to the nest for the night. Next morning I inspected the nest and saw that the camouflage material was gone and the depression uncovered, more like a conventional nest.

The birds continued to grow, and the elder three became quite independent, although formed a family group when danger threatened, such as when a hawk thought a baby grebe would make a good meal. seven rapid disappearances was quite a sight.

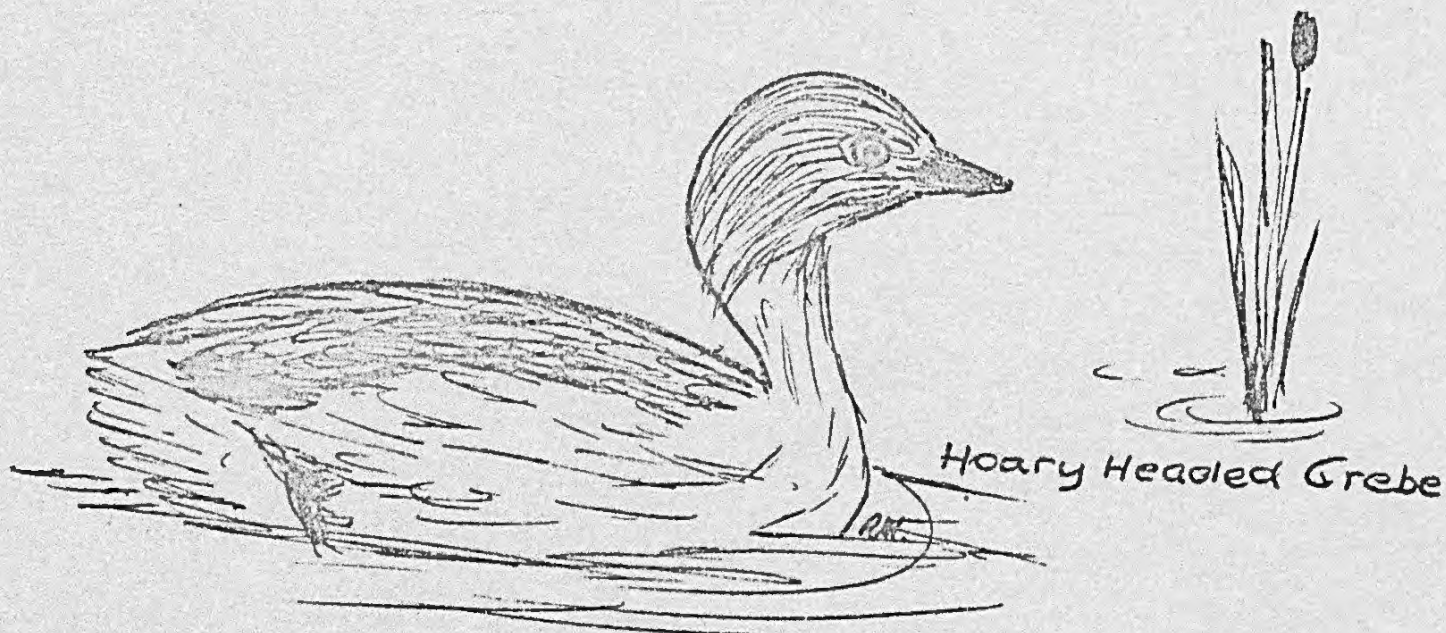
About mid-February, father bird began acting strangely. He would suddenly squawk and run along the water flapping his wings for about 8-10 feet, settling back and looking a bit sheepish while all the others looked on with what looked like amusement.

It only happened a few times, and I thought he was starting to teach the young ones to fly. However I was wrong, as a few days later after this behaviour I noticed the hen bird was sitting again. Perhaps the display was a perfunctory attempt at establishing or declaring his territory - but to whom did it concern.

This time there are four eggs in the nest. Mother has been sitting full time, the weather and the water is cooler. the eggs are off-white this time, and quite grubby, probably from the activity early in Summer.

I'll report on the success, or otherwise of this later sitting at a General Meeting.

GEORGE SITCH.



In Case you wish to Camp —

W.V.F.N.C.A. BENDIGO CAMPOUT, WEEKEND 24-25 APRIL 1982

HOST CLUB

Bendigo F.N.C.

VENUE

Rotary Camp, Axedale, 2 1/2 kilometres ^{east} from Bendigo. The camp is situated close to the west bank of the Campaspe River in very pleasant surroundings.

The turn-off into the camp is on the Axedale/Eppalock road.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation at the Rotary Camp is of dormitory type. There are four huts with beds and mattresses for a total of about 90 people, and male and female toilet and shower blocks. The camp has a large well equipped kitchen, a large dining room, and a spacious lounge area around an open fireplace. There is also a large recreation hall, suitable for meetings.

It is hoped that as many people as possible will use the dormitory accommodation, but there is room around the camp for a limited number of caravans and tents. Please notify John Lindner at 62 Simpsons Road, Eaglehawk, or phone on (054) 46 7132 if you intend bringing a caravan or tent, as it will be necessary to give the caretaker some warning of the likely number. Please bring long extension leads if you wish to be connected to the electricity supply.

The camp is not available until after 4.00 P.M. on Friday 23rd April, as another group will be in residence until the early afternoon, and the caretaker needs time for cleaning. Similarly, we will need to vacate the site by 4.00 P.M. on Sunday 25th.

COST: The charge per head will be \$4.50 for two nights, to cover use of facilities on a self catering basis.

MOTELS:

1. Broilga Hotel-Motel
Lake Eppalock
KIMBOLTON Phone: (054) 392533
2. All Seasons Motor Inn
Melvor Highway
BENDIGO Phone: (054) 438166

PROGRAMME

Friday afternoon and evening (after 4.00 p.m.).

Arrive. Set up camp.

If arriving early, informal activities as per Saturday.

(see March C.N.)

CALENDAR

APRIL Saturday and Sunday 24 and 25

W.V.F.N.C.A. Campout at the Rotary Camp at Axedale.
The program was published in the March issue of the
Castlemaine Naturalist.

FRIDAY MAY 14

Mr Kent is unable to come. Program will be announced in next issue.

SATURDAY MAY 15

Geology outing to Maldon.

FRIDAY JUNE 11

Members' night - never too soon to think about what
you will do. Any new slides, books, articles, trips, etc.?

SATURDAY JUNE 12

Outing to Firth Park, Trentham East, to see the
Fungi.

THE CLUB RECIEVES A NUMBER OF MAGAZINES REGULARLY,
INCLUDING ECOS, RURAL RESEARCH, THE BIRD OBSERVERS'
CLUB NEWSLETTER, NEWSLETTERS FROM OTHER CLUBS, INC.
GEELONG, BENDIGO, MARYBOROUGH AND BENALLA. THERE
ARE ALSO A NUMBER OF OLD "WILDLIFE" MAGAZINES AND SUCH.
THESE CAN ALL BE BORROWED BY MEMBERS.. THEY ARE AVAILABLE
ON ANY MEETING NIGHT.

General meetings are held on the second Friday of the month
at 8pm in the Education Centre, Castlemaine.


Outings usually take place on the following Saturday, leav-
ing the Education centre at 1.30 pm, after organizing people
into cars, etc.

Business meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the
month, at 8 pm in the Ed. Centre. Any interested member is
invited to attend these meetings.

Any alterations to the above arrangements will be notified.

* Members of the public, visitors and intending members are
always welcome to attend meetings or outings.

President;	Mr G. Broadway	Ph 72 2513
Secretary:	Mrs M. Lindsay	72 2720
Treasurer:	Mr F. Meyer	72 1958
Newsletter:	Mrs R. Mills	-

N.B.  Contributions to the Newsletter may be
left at Tonks Bros., 224 Barker St.